

What's Inside

Obscene & Heard
..... Pg. 2

What's The Difference
..... Pg. 3

An Unhealthy Economy
..... Pg. 4

Book Report
Arsenal of Folly - The
Making of the Nuclear Arms
Race..... Pg. 5

To Reform or Not To Reform
..... Pg. 8

What is Socialism
..... Pg. 9

Declaration of Principles
..... Pg. 11

**We welcome
correspondence
from our readers.
Send email to
spc@iname.com
or write us at
Box 4280
Victoria, BC
Canada
V8X 3X8**

2011 - THE YEAR OF REVOLUTION

By all standards, 2011 will go down as a remarkable year of unrest, uprising, demonstration, and change. The Arab Spring seemingly burst out of nowhere, catalyzed by a street vendor's self-immolation in Tunisia. That led to mass demonstrations that unseated the country's leader. That spark ignited strong and dogged demonstrations in Egypt in Tahrir Square, in Cairo, that continued until President Mubarek was forced to relinquish power. Then across the Middle East, oppressed peoples rose in their turn to rid themselves of their own dictators – in Yemen, in Bahrain, in Syria, in Libya. Some have not been successful but are ongoing. Rebels in Libya were fortunate to receive air and weapons support from NATO as civil war broke out. At the time of writing, the situation in Syria is dire for the protestors facing the tanks and guns of the army.

A few things have become clear. All these countries were suffering from world economic conditions that meant high unemployment, especially among the youth, and a sharp rise in food prices that made it difficult, even for those lucky enough to have work, to put food on the table. Parents don't tolerate seeing their kids go hungry for long without acting. They had, of course, put up with brutal dictatorships, secret police, torture, and absolutely no say in the way their countries are run for decades. It was a recipe for disaster, an uprising waiting to happen, and we salute the courage shown by the men and women of those countries.

What were the results? In Tunisia and Egypt, the people have been forced to take to the streets again to force interim leadership to get on with the job of establishing democracy. In Egypt, the army is in firm control. It could easily have crushed the uprising but the generals chose to get Mubarek out of the way. In Libya, the NATO assistance ensured the fall and death of the Khadafi regime. The presence of oil in that country may have had something to do with NATO's involvement. Khadafi was a loose canon and oil supplies, dwindling as they are, need a steady and reliable supply. It's even better if those supplies can be controlled by Western capitalists. The struggles in Yemen and Syria continue without result so far. Probably the best result that can be hoped for, under the circumstances, is for the establishment of some kind of limited democracy. Socialism – common ownership, free access etc – has never been brought forward, although, presumably, socialist parties will be able to organize where the knowledge and will arise.

Lessons that come out of the Arab Spring so far are 1) that uprisings, no matter how popular, have little chance against the guns and tanks of the state without outside help or the mass defection of state troops. In countries with universal suffrage, it is better to use the legal parliamentary system, which, by the way, ensures a majority with legitimacy to establish socialism 2) the domino effect that created uprisings in several countries proves the power of social networking and modern technology which can grease the wheels of capitalism's slide into oblivion once the people want socialism 3) socialism cannot be established unless there is class consciousness among the masses and it is an articulated goal.

**libya
algeria
bahrain
egypt★
tunisia★**
support the people's
revolution



The second event of note was, and is, the Occupy Movement. Although most of the Occupy sites have been cleared, the movement continues. Like the Arab uprisings, Occupy appears to have occurred through spontaneous combustion, thanks again to modern technology. Occupy sites appeared almost simultaneously all over the world, all with the same slogan, "We are the ninety-nine per cent". This does prove socialists right when we say a socialist revolution and its ideas would not be confined to one country or region but would spread like a virus throughout the world. National borders may be armed to the teeth and policed 24/7 to keep people in or out, but they cannot contain and stifle ideas or electronic signals.

A pleasing aspect of Occupy, at least the one we visited, was the socialist-like organization – no leaders, and therefore no followers, decisions made democratically through elected committees, and daily discussions of the topics in a public forum – more or less as we see a socialist world working. Although individual opinions vary among the rank and file, Occupy does not understand, nor promote, socialism. They appear to see the major problem as the great and growing gulf between the 1% and the 99%. Focus on this aspect of capitalism, a natural consequence of the capitalist mode of production, has led to solutions to reduce the gap when it really has to be eliminated altogether. It's not good enough to simply expect to finish up with less poor and less rich and leave the system that demands that there be a gap in tact. All inequality – economic, political, racial, gender must end. Given that, it must be quite obvious that we haven't had equality of access to necessary goods and services since the advent of private property. As soon as surplus grain became available in the first agrarian revolution ten thousand years ago, someone grabbed it as theirs by force or cunning and inequality was born and continued through the slave empires, through feudalism, and into our present economic system. So we have a system that is based on inequality – owners and non-owners, employers and employees, capitalists and workers. Inequality has been around a long time but that doesn't mean it must or will last forever. It must be obvious if we think this through to its logical conclusion that we must simply get rid of private property, the private monopoly of creating and distributing wealth.

Common ownership of the world's resources and their use for producing necessary goods and free access for all mankind to all these goods, as needed, will necessarily end inequality. There won't be owners and classes any more - we will all be owners!

Obscene & Heard

Kim Kardashian was reported in the Daily Mail on Feb 29 to be renting a 67 000 square foot mansion for \$40 000 a month. She decided to leave the \$5 million home she bought after a crazed fan showed up at her door saying she had invited him to stay. Her new palace has six bathrooms, four bedrooms, and an infinity pool. That's pretty nice when millions all over the world exist on a dollar or two a day. Do we as socialists begrudge Kim her luxurious life-style? No, we begrudge an economic system that creates such extreme disparities of wealth and causes the cult of the celebrity with its accompanying celebrity worship.

On March 1st, it was reported a super powerful gun that shoots rounds more than 160 kilometres away, at several times the speed of sound, is in development for the US Navy. The weapon is known as an electromagnetic rail gun. It consists of parallel rails and uses a magnetic field and electric current instead of chemicals to generate energy to fire. The 12.19 metre-long gun is expected to be ready in 2017. The gun's speed and range would allow ships to give support for marines storming a beach or target enemy ships, and defend against cruise and ballistic missiles. The estimated cost of the weapon will be about \$240 million. Consider that about one billion people go to bed hungry every night and you will get a sense of capitalism's priorities.

This is proving to be a particularly stubborn recession. The Toronto Star reported (January 28, 2012) that American cities, the engine of the economy, are not doing well. Twenty-six cities reported a rebound in employment to pre-recession peaks. Three hundred and thirty-seven have not. The desperation cost-cutting by municipalities has resulted in a loss of 533 000 jobs in local governments since 2008. Not a great way to kick-start the economy. Regular recessions are a natural part of the capitalist economy, euphemistically referred to as 'the business cycle' by the economists, the cheerleaders of capitalism.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE!

Many who read this will have seen the Dragon's Den/Shark Tank on TV, but for those who haven't, it's a program that harks back to medieval times. Applicants come and apply to a group of millionaires for loans in return for a part ownership in their business. The premise is that since all these millionaires started from nothing, so can the supplicant, and therefore capitalism must be the best of all systems. As if being successful in business, and many fail, can justify a system that causes environmental destruction, war, alienation, racism, and many others.



Foremost among these millionaires, called sharks or dragons, is the ever-acerbic Kevin O'Leary. This businessman views everything from one angle only, 'How much money can I make'. A classic O'Leary quote is, "The only warm, fuzzy feeling I get is at the end of the month when I count the money." He once told a prospective business partner, "There's something nasty about you and I like it." When a loan applicant mentions that a product is environmentally friendly or ethically sound, he usually says something like, 'I don't care about that, I only care about how much money I will make.'



REDEMPTION INC.
WITH KEVIN O'LEARY

Now O'Leary has his own show, "Redemption Inc." where a group of would-be entrepreneurs are given a series of business-related tests in which they compete to sell the most products or assist those who do. This can be as varied as cleaning cars at an auto-dealers or stopping dog walkers to push grooming services. The show is run on similar lines to Donald Trump's "The Apprentice", but with the difference that the 'apprentices' are ex-convicts. When the idea was first pitched to him, O'Leary made his only - to a socialist anyway - hilarious comment, "Are you out of your mind? I'm running a financial services company, I can't get involved with criminals!" One may well wonder about the difference, especially when one ex-con, commenting on life in the slammer, said, "To survive you've got to be a move ahead of the other guy. You have to figure where he's coming from and going to".

O'Leary, after being won over, expressed it best and with his usual subtlety, "If you are a drug dealer, for example, you've got

logistics, you've got distribution issues, you're dealing with marketing, finance, and sales. You're a real businessman, you should be running Fed-Ex." Perhaps, though he didn't say it, they would have done just fine running the financial companies that caused the sub-prime mortgage disaster. In one respect there is nothing subtle about Redemption Inc. It's basic premise is that anyone can make it in capitalism, even those who have sinned against it.

Capitalism's legal system exists primarily to protect for the capitalist class the wealth they have stolen from the working class, their surplus-value, i.e. that value the workers have produced over and above what they get paid, in other words, legal theft. It is money the capitalist class takes without advancing anything. To this end, the whole legal apparatus of laws, courts, lawyers, police, and the armed services exists. It is well to remember that on some occasions these very armed services are used to break strikes and public demonstrations such as the G20 demonstrations in Toronto. As far as I know, they have never forced a company that has locked out its workers to reopen, or to continue to bargain in good faith. The fact that a policeman may catch the thief who stole a workingman's wallet is purely incidental. It's laughable to think that the capitalist class would devise such a set-up to protect the property of the working slob.

Those members of the working class who violate capitalism's laws and get caught must pay the price that may include a stretch in jail. Most 'crimes' are those caused by poverty and need, perceived or otherwise. So it becomes clear that there are two kinds of theft. An employer may legally steal the products made by the worker, or, more accurately, the surplus-value those products contain, but if one of the employees walks out with a product he has made, or helped to make, he would be arrested and prosecuted. Most companies have security guards and surveillance systems for this purpose.

Some may argue that capitalists themselves are accused, tried, convicted, and imprisoned and certainly the likes of Garth Drabinsky, Conrad Black, and Bernie Madoff are prime examples. Though the legal system in every country exists to keep the working class in its place, it has a secondary purpose. The law has to ensure the smooth running of business as a whole and therefore regulates dealings between capitalists. Though the above-mentioned hurt a lot of little guys, they also hurt some big ones. Whether a thief is inside jail or outside, theft is theft. As socialists, we advocate a world where the tools of production and the world's wealth are held in common and where all humankind may take from the common pool of goods and services, as needed, for a full and happy life. In such a world, theft would not exist, nor, obviously would a program like "Redemption Inc.". In fact, a man like Kevin O'Leary would lead a constructive and useful life.

AN UNHEALTHY ECONOMY

On December 19th, federal Finance Minister, Jim Flaherty, dropped a bombshell by informing Canada's provincial governments that the annual six per cent increases in health transfers will not be guaranteed by Ottawa after 2016. Instead of six per cent, the increase will be tied to the rate of economic growth and inflation that Flaherty predicts will be in the four per cent range. What genius! In this guy we have another economic expert who knows exactly where the economy will be years from now!

Reaction from provincial ministers was immediate and furious. Ontario Finance Minister, Dwight Duncan, said, "The anger among my colleagues was absolutely palpable. There is no agreement. It's a unilateral federal offer. Our Christmas present this year is a lump of coal. This gives us certainty all right – certainty that health care is being undermined. This is an attack on public health care." Manitoba's Finance Minister, Stan Strothers, was incensed by the high-handed actions of the federal government, "I'm open to any discussion on any angle in terms of the whole ball of wax of transfers – equalization, health, social transfers. I'm open to speaking with the minister on any of that. We didn't have that today. This was very unilateral."

Ontario Premier, Dalton McGuinty, was expecting to negotiate with Prime Minister Harper, "The federal Conservative Party did, during the election, make a commitment to six per cent and I expect them to honour that, but it's going to take more than just new dollars. It's going to take accountability, it's going to take reforms, it's going to take targets, and we'll have to hold ourselves to account for bringing about improvement."

During the last election the Conservatives 'suggested' that, if elected, they would continue with the annual six per cent increases. Some would say it's just another example of a party making vote-winning promises they had no intention of keeping. Others might argue that a broken promise doesn't necessarily mean insincerity, but that, once elected, the hard, cold realities of administering capitalism force politicians to compromise with their good intentions. Either way, it means the same thing – the working class, who voted the government into power, will suffer.

Ottawa claims that with transfers at nearly \$27 billion per year, it cannot continue with the increases. Since the Conservative Party stands for the continuation of capitalism, once elected, it becomes the executive committee of the capitalist class, grappling with capitalism's multiplicity of problems while trying to manage the system in the interests of the owners of capital. At present, Ottawa has a \$31 billion budget deficit which Harper, Flaherty and company have to reduce. As Flaherty said, "We all realize that public finances relate to revenues and we can't pretend to spend money we don't have." Here we have a ridiculous situation where those who try to run capitalism at a

provincial level are getting shafted by those who try to run it at the federal level. This would all be hilarious were the effects of their actions not so serious on the ordinary worker. Those who need health care will not always be able to access it. The absurdity of it all is emphasized by McGuinty's comments about the need for reforms.

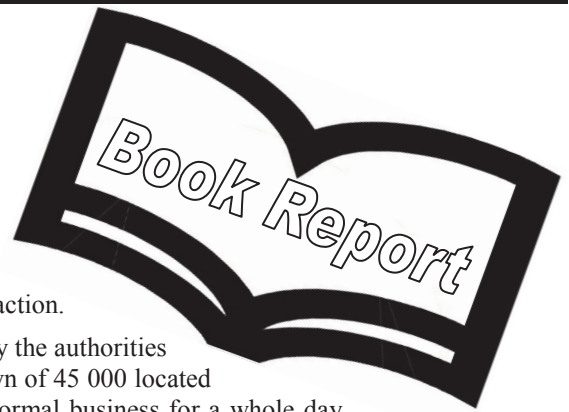
The most significant question of all is 'can this problem be dealt with in capitalism?' Can you have access to the health system when needed while leaving the fundamentals of the capitalist system intact? Socialists do not oppose reforms, some of which, like medicare, are of benefit to the working class. What we do not do is advocate them because we have something better to advocate. What we do is point out the nature of the capitalist system and how their benefits are mostly temporary. Medicare is beneficial to the capitalist class also. In Britain, in 1939, when many thousands of young men were drafted for the war, it was found that an alarming percentage were not fit 'to fight for king and country' after a decade of depression era unemployment and poor nutrition. Hence the British Health Act of 1948. Many called it 'The Back To Work Act', implying, correctly, it was to repair an injured worker so he could return all the sooner to be exploited. As early as 1951, this great reform was in trouble with the addition of some prescription charges (initially free) being added. Now everyone agrees the system is in a mess with the government contracting out services and allowing a parallel private system. So much for the permanence of reforms!

Here in Canada, we are all aware how the quality of health care has declined and will do so even further with the reduction on transfers to the provinces. Emergency waiting times have increased with too few physicians on hand; patients wait longer for operations and are often sent home too soon because beds are needed; some of our best medical specialists go into the private sector or to another country for higher pay; many nurses are employed part-time on contract where they are paid less and have few benefits. It is about to get worse. It's a case of starving the system of adequate funds to help usher in a private system and a decades-long policy of reducing taxes (and thereby increasing the portion of the surplus-value that goes to profits) leaving all governments to do nothing but cut programs, including health.

There is only one answer, the democratic ownership and management of the whole system of producing and distributing wealth. This would necessarily mean the abolition of money and the production of goods and services to meet the real needs of the whole community. In such a system, all will contribute according to their abilities and take from the common pool whatever they need. There will be no barrier for anyone seeking medical care or anything else of the necessities of life. That will no longer depend on the size of one's bank account. That is socialism and it is ready to be implemented now. Are you ready to work for it?

Arsenals of Folly - The Making of the Nuclear Arms Race

By Richard Rhodes



The book is about the lunacy of the so-called 'Cold War' and by extension that of the economic system that engenders and sustains such diabolical thought and action.

The story begins with the Chernobyl Nuclear accident and the glacial response by the authorities both to the local communities and the world at large. For example, Pripyat, a town of 45 000 located just two miles Northwest of the burning reactor, was allowed to go about its normal business for a whole day without any warning. Only the next day, when radiation levels were getting dangerously high, were evacuation plans made and high school girls were sent out door to door with iodine tablets. As the plumes of radiation advanced towards Finland and Sweden, no public announcements came from the Kremlin. Eventually, scientists in Sweden detected rising levels of radiation and the awful truth slowly leaked out. What the Soviet public and the world did not know was that at least thirteen serious power reactor accidents had occurred in the Soviet Union before Chernobyl.

Here, the author introduces Mikhail Gorbachev and his policy of 'glasnost', or transparency, that failed to materialize throughout this disaster. Rhodes recounts the story of Gorbachev's life and rise to power as he will later play a large part in the attempts at nuclear weapons reduction treaties. He was born in a time of crisis, the son of a southern farmer, when it was normal to see corpses strewn along roadsides and starving families reduced to eating horse manure or the flesh of the dead, "In medieval times such disastrous conditions would have measured an outbreak of the Black Death. In March 1931, in a western corner of the Stavropol steppe lands of the North Caucasus, over the mountains from Georgia, it measured Joseph Stalin's deliberate starvation of the independent farmers who dared to resist giving up their hard-won land, animals, and machinery for the unrewarding serfdom of the collective farm." Despite this and the fact that Gorbachev's grandfather was arrested and tortured, they, like many, remained loyal to Stalin, preferring to believe it was the work of the enforcers. Gorbachev began his climb through the ranks specializing in agriculture.

After the brutal devastation of World War II, recovery in the Soviet Union was slow and painful especially for the ordinary citizen. In a pattern that was to be repeated endlessly for the next half-century, billions of rubles were diverted from the social sphere into a crash program to build the atomic bomb and then stockpiling a nuclear arsenal, catalyzed, of course, by the successful Anglo-American attempt to produce the bomb during the war and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The US quickly achieved nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union that led a succession of presidents, beginning with Eisenhower, to limit nuclear expansion and proliferation. Treaties, from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 through test ban treaties and those to establish nuclear-free zones, were signed over the following decades. However, the book is a story of the hijacking of these attempts towards peace and sanity, no matter how small, by cadres of maniacs on both sides of the Cold War. For example a third 'Fat Man' atomic bomb had been readied for delivery to Japan. Henry Wallace, Secretary of Commerce, recalls that, at a cabinet meeting, Truman said that the thought of wiping out another 100 000 people was too horrible. He didn't like the idea of killing all those kids. And yet, because he had to win the war for his capitalist class, he had already Okayed the most horrific attack on human beings in history.

The Korean War galvanized the president to "take the lid off" any thoughts of cutting back. By the mid 1950s, eight sites of the Atomic Energy Commission employed 142 000 workers, up from 55 000 in 1950, and exceeded in capital investment the combined capitalization of Bethlehem Steel, US Steel, Alcoa, Dupont, Goodyear, and General Motors. The nuclear arms race was on! Between 1953 and 1955, US nuclear stockpiles doubled from 878 weapons to 1 756, or from 73 megatons (4 867 Hiroshimas) to 2 880 megatons (192 000 Hiroshimas)!

Next, targets had to be decided for all this weaponry – industrial complexes or civilians. General Curtis Lemay, Commander-in-Chief of Strategic Air Command, wanted cities with industrial targets in case of a miss there would be 'bonus damage' of civilian casualties. Robert Gates, CIA director under George H.W. Bush, recalls that after briefing a general that most nuclear warheads targeted Soviet Inter Continental Missile sites, that the general went ballistic and shouted that 'it was a goddamn outrage' to be targeting what would probably be empty silos '...when the balloon went up. I want to kill some fucking Russians, not dig up dirt!'

Meanwhile, the Soviets struggled to keep up, always seemingly chasing an impossible target. One sacrifice of their futile attempts was to give up, and lose, the race to the moon. Having to back down from the Cuban Missile Crisis, because of obvious inferiority, left a strong impression on the Soviet Politburo, "That the US could force leaders of the Soviet Union to remove their missiles from Cuba frightened and deeply humiliated them" writes Rhodes. The Soviets immediately set about increasing their arsenal, particularly Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles. Going from fewer than one hundred to 1 500 by 1972. The plain fact was, though, that the US

Book Report *continued*

economy was much larger than that of the Soviet Union, and could more easily afford to divert funds to the military, though not without dire consequences as we shall see.

With obvious nuclear superiority, it became necessary in the US to exaggerate the Soviet capabilities to keep the military-industrial complex humming. Reports and groups operating in presidential circles consistently hammered away with the idea of Soviet world domination. The NSC-68 report of the 1950s, for example, egregiously exaggerated Soviet capabilities of overrunning Western Europe and reaching the Middle East oil fields and launching nuclear strikes against Britain, the Atlantic and Pacific shipping lanes, and specific targets in Alaska, Canada, and the US. That year the Soviets had just five atomic bombs! NSC-68 also succeeded in uncoupling the military budget from the civilian expenditures. Henceforth, the military budget would be set first and what was left went to the civilian purposes. It worked that way, too, in the Soviet Union but with very little left over which explains the low and stagnant standard of living and chronic shortages of consumer goods there.

The culture of keeping the truth from the public is, of course, a normal process of capitalism. If the full extent of the deception of capitalism were out, the game would be up for those who own but do not work. When Henry Kissinger responded to a question re nuclear superiority during the SALT talks in Moscow, 1974, by stating that ‘what in the name of God is superiority and why is it necessary’, he won few friends among the policy elite. Rhodes writes, “Telling the truth about the cynicism of the nuclear arms race was politically dangerous.” When the CIA, in 1973, disagreed with assessment that the Soviet Union was building towards a first strike capability, the conservatives came up with the idea of an alternate CIA, a ‘Team B’ approach that would counteract any such nonsense. It was selected from experienced political and military analysts of Soviet affairs and known to lean towards exaggerating the Soviet threat. Its members were frequently co-opted to presidential advisory positions. When Michigan Institute of Technology president and science advisor to Kennedy, Jerome Weisner, stated in 1984 that as few as fifty bombs would put a society out of business and three hundred placed in either the US or USSR would destroy their civilization, Team B went to work to refute “the science professors from Harvard”.

Team B included, among others, Perle, Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, and Cheney, all of whom would pop up again in important positions in the administration of George W. Bush.

In 1975, the conservatives re-organized the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD). Its policy statement, “Common Sense and Common Danger” emphasized that ‘the principle threat to our nation is the Soviet drive for dominance based on an unparalleled military build-up’. Another new organization, The European-American Workshop, pursued adding Cruise missiles to NATO’s nuclear arsenal to counter similar Soviet deployment.

By the time Reagan came to power, the Team B and CPD approach had achieved its aim of convincing the intelligence community and the people that the Soviet Union was stronger than the US and was aiming for world domination. Against this was juxtaposed the facts. As early as the 1970s at least, there were signs the Soviet Union was in trouble. The failure of their agricultural policies was plain to see for the whole world by its grain purchases. Rhodes cites French historical demographer, Emmanuel Todd, who, in his Book, “The Final Fall” (1976) claimed accurately that internal pressures were pushing the Soviet Union to the breaking point, and that collapse would probably occur in ten, twenty, or thirty years. Todd noted the zero growth of the Soviet economy, the sluggishness of the centralized system, and predicted, ‘there will be no recovery.’ Unfortunately, for all his insight, Todd saw the Soviet Union as an example of practical, real communism, noting that it had all the vices of capitalism that Marx had condemned. We, of course, see the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, et al, simply as another form of capitalism, a form run by the state.

Against all this mounting evidence and realization of impending disaster for the Soviet system, apparently believed by Reagan, the scare mongers got their way. Reagan allowed an unprecedented build-up of arms during his presidency. Thirty-one appointees of his administration were members of the CPD. They managed to increase military spending by ten per cent per year, a five-year plan that cost \$1.46 trillion. Rhodes cites political scientist, Daniel Wirls, “In budgetary terms, this change is ...striking: from 1981 to 1987 discretionary spending on domestic programs decreased by 21% while defense outlays increased by 45%.” Journalist Frances Fitzgerald assessing the ‘warrior intellectuals of the CPD and the Reagan administration, wrote, “...they offer not one single constructive suggestion as to what the United States might do to, say, prevent widespread famine, stop the crazy lurches of the economic system, prevent ecological disaster or simply keep the peace and lessen the risk of nuclear war.”

Meanwhile the Soviet Union had its own alarmists. By 1981, the KGB and its military counterpart joined forces in a massive intelligence gathering operation to assess the level of the US threat. The result was a series of military mobilizations and exercises by both super powers. In the middle of this, Reagan astonished the Soviets with his announcement of The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), dubbed Star Wars by the press, that he insisted was purely a defensive system to nullify nuclear weapons. Although SDI was simply an idea not based on real science, it allowed Americans to believe they could win, or at least survive a nuclear war. For the KGB it vindicated their fears and engendered a new fear of falling behind. Far from seeing SDI as defensive, they saw it as nuclear war conducted from space, and, predictably, urged more military spending to catch up

Book Report *continued*

The shooting down of Korean Airlines flight KE 007 in September 1983 (the Soviet fighters could have intercepted much earlier but had very little fuel in their tanks to prevent defections) and the NATO mobilization of troops in Europe known as Able Archer in November, brought the world close to nuclear war. Rhodes comments, “ All this evidence points to the same conclusion: That the United States and the Soviet Union, apes on a treadmill, inadvertently blundered close to nuclear war...That, and not the decline and fall of the Soviet Union, was a return on the neoconservatives’ long, cynical and radically partisan investment in threat inflation and arms-race escalation.”

Into this atmosphere stepped Gorbachev. His experiences in the Agricultural Ministry had made him realize the antiquated and inefficient system that lacked innovation and funds. A large reduction in military spending would be a start. So began the arms reduction talks. Both Reagan and Gorbachev apparently wanted to abolish all nuclear weapons, a non-starter for both sets of advisors. At Geneva Gorbachev was appalled at Reagan’s use of cue cards commenting on his ‘mumbling of banalities from a piece of paper’. Reagan’s responses were so predictable and practiced that Gorbachev was moved to say to his own people that ‘I have met a caveman – a dinosaur!’ The sticking point always seemed to be Gorbachev’s insistence on ending Star Wars, both at Geneva and later at Reykjavic. Opposition to arms reduction was, naturally, strong in the American camp. Cheney distrusted arms negotiations fearing they would reduce the military budget, “I don’t think the notion of a military threat to the interests of the United States was invented by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union...” They won the day.

As the Soviet Union broke up, the United States was the last one left standing and therefore seen as victorious in the Cold War. However, estimates of the cost of this policy are at least \$5.5 trillion. Scientist Carl Sagan estimated the cost at \$10 trillion, “ Enough to buy everything in the US apart from the land. What we bought for a waste of treasure unprecedented in human history was not peace or even safety, but a perverse decline in the capacity and clemency of American life. As in the countries of the former Soviet Union, but not so severely, even male life expectancy stalled compared to European democracies and Japan.” What the American and Russian people lost in life and in life style is immeasurable. The “Report Card for American Infrastructure”, by the American Society of Civil Engineers, for example, gave the following ratings in 2001 – Aviation D, Bridges C, Dams D, Drinking Water D, National Power Grid D+, Hazardous Waste D+, Navigable Waterways D+, Roads D+, Schools D-, Solid Waste C+, Transit C-, Wastewater D –, not one single satisfactory level in the richest country in the world!

Rhodes writes, “ Far from victory in the Cold War, the super power Nuclear-arms race and the corresponding militarization of the American economy gave us ramshackle cities, broken bridges, failing schools, entrenched poverty, impeded life expectancy, and a menacing and secretive national-security state that held the entire human world hostage.”

In any case, the end of the cold war was never an end to rivalry between the US and Russia (or any other power aspiring to challenge for resources and markets). It continues to this day and will go on as long as this economic system lasts.

Barely ten years after the end of the Cold War, a new enemy was identified – terrorism, and the spending once again spiraled upwards to the benefit of the investors in the military/industrial complex. Colin Powell had ominously remarked, “I’m running out of demons. I’m running out of villains. I’m down to Castro and Kim Il Sung.” 9/11 set off a whole new venture into a war economy, fueled by creating an atmosphere of fear and cleverly creating an enemy that couldn’t be pinned down, and therefore defeated, a war that could conceivably go on forever. The sheer scale of waste, lost opportunity, and loss of life is almost unbelievable. The vast majority has been conned, hoodwinked, lied to for years by the minority.

Rhodes lays bare the madness of our present world system, capitalism, although he does not, of course, identify the culprit. A world that is divided into about two hundred units, each demarking its territory with arbitrary lines on a map, defending those lines with all the might they can muster to protect what they have and waging war to get those resources they do not have is a very primitive human stage, especially when compared to mankind’s intellectual and technological advances and compared to the world we might have in a common ownership, cooperative society. The threat and the waging of war is the inevitable result of a competitive world driven by the need to increase profits and dividends and thus the necessity to control resources and markets. Surely, as human beings, we are ready to end this sorry stage of our history.

Obituary

Bill Johnson

Bill passed away since the last issue of Imagine. Bill was a long time SPC member and party treasurer. I’m glad to say I was able to meet him personally and receive his hospitality during my visit to BC.

He will be missed by family, friends, and comrades.



To Reform or Not To Reform

Socialists are frequently asked where the party stands on various reforms and the questioner is usually amazed to hear that we don't advocate reforms. This does not necessarily mean that we oppose them. What we do oppose is a policy of reformism which is quite a different matter.

There are different kinds of reforms; some are of the immediate, bread and butter kind, e.g. medicare, minimum wage, forty-hour week, safety legislation in the workplace; some affect democratic rights such as the extension of the franchise, freedom of the press and of assembly. Others are similar, but on a broader, more humanitarian level, e.g. civil rights, an end to discrimination in the workplace, the right to abortion, equal rights for gays. The list of reforms both proposed and enacted is almost endless, but there is one common thread – they make life more bearable within capitalism. This is also in the interests of the capitalist class. Contented and healthy workers are less likely to disrupt the system and more likely to be more productive in the process of exploitation and fit to fight the bosses' wars.

However, different and competing sections of the capitalist class will have different priorities. In the last thirty years, during which the upholders of neo-liberal capitalism have mostly held power, there has been a general trend by those politicians, (Thatcher, Reagan, Harris) to remove or water down reforms. The abolition of medicare would create business for the Health Insurance companies who pour fortunes into politicians' election expense funds. In Ontario, a decade ago, we saw the Harris government blatantly passing a law giving employers the right to institute a sixty-hour week. In 1964, the Johnson administration passed the Civil Rights Act which has been ignored by some state governments, the reality being that state laws supercede federal ones.

We of the Socialist Party of Canada do not oppose measures that are beneficial, however temporary the benefit may turn out to be. What we oppose is any party that offers a program of reforms. This is because no amount of reforms will change the fundamentals of society as presently constituted, i.e. the ownership of the tools of production by a small minority and the consequent wage enslavement of the majority, leaving capitalism to stumble and blunder along from one crisis to another. Many parties of the Left have argued that socialist consciousness grows out of the struggle to satisfy immediate needs. If there were any credence to that theory, we would have socialism now, or at least a movement for socialism millions strong.

When any party claiming to be socialist advocates a reform or supports one being advocated by an avowedly capitalist party,

they attract new supporters and voters. These may or may not support, or even understand, socialism, but they are primarily interested in the reform of their choice. If too many join they become a majority and the party becomes a reformist one. It may be interesting to review the performances of our critics on the Left in this regard. There are many examples of them falling into the reformist trap. There were many socialists in the early days of the British Labour Party, The Socialist Party of America (SPA), and the Canadian Cooperative Commonwealth Party (the forerunner of the New Democratic Party). The philosophy of these parties was, 'We want socialism but it will take a long time to convince millions of people and, since conditions are so bad now, we need something in the meantime'. The problem was 'in the meantime' became forever. Nobody would say these parties are socialist now, including the parties themselves! What may not have been obvious in the early years of these groups, but has become so with the passing years, is that if one wants reforms the avowedly capitalist parties will be only too happy to pass them if there is a pressing need and it is popular to do so or when socialist ideas start taking hold.



The Second Working Men's International, that contained many brilliant socialist writers, fell into the reformist trap to such an extent that our companion party in Britain refused to affiliate. After the Russian Revolution, some of these parties fell into another trap, that of state capitalism, which is just another way to administer capitalism. Trotskyist groups have campaigned against unemployment without regard to its cause, and in the US worked hard in

the Civil Rights movement, oblivious to the fact that white people do not even have equality with each other. There can be no equality within a capitalist society. At the last federal election in Canada, the so-called communist party published a manifesto of their policies, all of which were reformist. A typical example was that they would heavily tax the major corporations, thus indicating that corporations and the capitalist system would still exist if they won power.

The International Socialists (Socialist Workers' Party in the UK) are in the forefront of campaigning for reforms, believing it will lead workers to draw socialist conclusions. Not only are they unsuccessful, but have become elitist thinking that the working class cannot by itself arrive at socialist understanding but would need them (the IS) to organize a coup and establish it from above, which any knowledgeable socialist knows would be a disaster. For socialism to be established, it would have to be the democratic act of the immense majority who understand what it is and don't need leaders to tell them. The Socialist Labour Party has insisted for years that they are not reformist, but in the

presidential election of 1896, they presented a whole platform of reforms. A Few years later, Teddy Roosevelt took all these ideas and used them as the platform of his newly formed 'Bullmoose Party'. Nor have they changed much. In the last issue of their now-defunct journal, "People", they advocated campaigning for the repeal of the US Immigration Act. If one fights against a reform, one is still attacking the effects of capitalism.

All of the above organizations have criticized the Socialist Party of Canada and its companion parties for never advocating reforms, yet all of them have fallen into the trap of attempting to grapple with the worst effects of capitalism, which is all reforms do, and by doing so, knowingly or not, they are working for the continuation of capitalism. Time and energy spent in such

activities, is time and energy not spent working for socialism. Since the Industrial Revolution we have had two hundred years of reforms and still poverty is rampant, still industrial plants pollute the air, ground and waters, still wars rage killing millions.

We of the World Socialist Movement stand alone in advocating the immediate dissolution of the capitalist system and thus putting an end to its disastrous effects for mankind. Only by gaining control of the tools of production and the world's resources and managing them democratically in the interests of all humans, can we have a society where there will be no need for reforms.

So, why don't we advocate reforms? Because we have something better in mind.

What is Socialism?

The word socialism means many different things to many different people and it is used in many different contexts in the media. No wonder there is confusion. At our public presentations we are often asked what we stand for, what our platform is (establishment of a socialist society), are we Trotskyists (no), Leninists (no), and so on. I remember a canvasser for the New Democratic Party knocking on the door to deliver their election material. I told him I couldn't vote for his party as I was a socialist. Astonished, he said he thought the NDP was socialist. I then asked him what he thought socialism is and he replied that he couldn't really say!

The interpretation of socialism runs the gamut from the sublime to the ridiculous so it may be appropriate for us to investigate its meaning as far as we are concerned. Some see the Left Wing agenda as socialist, i.e. fighting for reforms such as raising the minimum wage, lower student fees, taxing the rich to pay for social programs etc. Obviously the deduction from this is that there will always be student fees, minimum wages, and the rich. While we are happy to see the working class get any advantage in living conditions, we see that reforms will never bring us closer to a socialist society and reformers accept that capitalism is the only game in town. To us, the Left Wing and the Right Wing are but two wings of the same bird – capitalism. In other words, both are part of the current destructive system.

Some see unions and their activities – collective bargaining, work-to-rule campaigns, strikes, the struggle for better pay and conditions – as part of socialism. While we agree that unions are a necessary institution for fighting against the worst excesses of capitalism and that they benefit the working class under capitalism, they do nothing to create a revolutionary activity, promote socialism, or any alternative to capitalism and, over time, they have been drawn closer and closer to accepting capitalism. Watching Canadian Auto Workers' Union president, Buzz Hargrove, with his arm around Liberal leader Paul Martin, the man who, when finance minister, balanced the budget on the backs of the workers through massive cuts to unemployment insurance and social programs in general, in a recent election,

just about says it all. In "Value, Price, and Profit, Marx wrote on unions, "They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it (i.e. capitalism) imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economic restructure of society. Instead of the conservative motto, '*A fair day's wages for a fair day's work*' they ought to inscribe on their banner the *revolutionary* watchword: '*Abolition of the wages system!*'... Trades Unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerrilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system." Unions, then, are not revolutionary, they react to capitalism's actions, and they are specific to their members, favouring one group of workers over another group, such as their members over workers in other countries, rather than taking a world-view of the class struggle.

Some people and the media see socialism as the central planning of the economy by the state government. This would include the nationalization of some major industries on the premise that if it belongs to the state, it belongs to the people. This would also essentially describe what occurred in the former Soviet Union and what is happening today in so-called socialist countries like Cuba. China, as is obvious, has abandoned even this pretence of this particular brand of socialism and opened its doors to capital investment from abroad although the 'communist party' remains firmly in control of the country. Nationalization was used as a tool to keep the economy running smoothly with the necessary services to capital that the capitalists couldn't do for themselves. Massive undertakings in roads, railways, health care, shipbuilding, steel production, coal mining, and other aspects of infrastructure were often too big an undertaking for the capitalist class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was difficult to raise the capital involved for the project and the risks

were enormous. In effect, the state was minding the service until agglomerations of capital became big enough for privatization. Since that time, most nationalized industries have been privatized or are under heavy pressure to do so. A nationalized industry is run like any other business – capital is advanced, raw materials and labour hired, and a commodity produced and sold at a profit, thanks to the theft of the surplus-value of the workers. Like private industry, the workers have no say whatsoever in the production process, do not own any of the commodities produced, and work at the pleasure of the owners, in this case the state. Workers must bargain collectively with state officials and often have to go on strike to preserve the gains that they have made previously. Throughout the twentieth century, beginning with the Russian Revolution of 1917, several countries declared themselves ‘socialist’ and were/are run by so-called communist parties. The parties of the World Socialist Movement, and many analytical people around the world, soon saw that these revolutions were simply bourgeois in nature, transferring power from the landed aristocracy to the new elite that functioned as a capitalist class. All revolutions were carried out by a small groups snatching power, i.e. were undemocratic, and forced on the majority who did not understand socialism. Police forces, secret terror organizations, and the army were needed to maintain power for the minority. Their economies were set up like those in the capitalist countries but run by the officials of the state, the ‘communist’ parties.

Some politicians and political parties brand themselves, or are branded by the media, as socialist. They are all simply vying with all other parties to run the capitalist system, to become its executive council. Some may genuinely want to improve conditions for the workers, but only in the context of the exploitive system that produces profits and enriches the minority from the unpaid labour of the workers. The New Democratic Party in Canada and the Labour Party in the UK, among many, started out with the idea of replacing capitalism with socialism. Both have dropped that idea, have concentrated on small palliative reforms, and rightly take their place among the pantheon of capitalist parties at election time. Papandreu of Greece, for example, recently deposed in the debt crisis fall-out, was described as a socialist but there is precious little evidence of socialism in his platform or actions.

Then there is the truly ridiculous. US president, Barack Obama is frequently described as a socialist by his opponents, particularly over his miniscule amendments to health care. He has never hinted, by word or deed, that he is anything of the sort. Recently, at the Florida Republican Party primary, Newt Gingrich, positioned about as far away from socialism as you can get, was called a socialist by opponent, Mitt Romney, for saying, “If we identify capitalism with rich guys looting companies, we are going to have a very hard time protecting it.” Gingrich had accused Romney of plundering floundering companies, tossing workers onto the street, and personally pocketing \$250 million as head of a successful private equity firm. No further comment necessary!

So what is socialism? To us, socialism means the common ownership of the means of producing and distributing wealth,

democratically managed in the interests of all mankind. That means the land, the resources, the factories, the transportation systems, would all be held in common and managed by democratically elected councils. It means everyone stands in the same relationship to production – no owners and non-owners, no employers and employed, no class system. Everyone would have access to decent shelter, food, education, health care and all other necessities of life. It would mean production for use, not profit, free access for everyone to the goods and services they need. All this would be accomplished with voluntary labour. Imagine, we could produce durable, quality goods with clean energy, practise real green initiatives and devise ways to clean up the environment, use scientists to further the progress of mankind instead of producing military hardware, and so on, because we, the people, would decide democratically what should be done. No more bosses, no more leaders telling us what needs to be done when we already know, no more media lies to obfuscate the truth. Can it be done realistically? Yes, because we, the workers, do everything now and don’t need anyone to tell us how to do it. It must be done only when the vast majority understands what socialism is and vote for it. Getting to that point will be the hardest thing yet achieved in human progress but we are convinced that if the truth is presented to the world, it will be accepted. A socialist system has never existed but it is obvious that it is the next step forward in human progress and is not only worth working for, it’s a necessity.

Capitalism

A class-based society

Minority private ownership of the means of wealth production and distribution.

Production and distribution for profit.

Access to necessities of life by economic demand i.e. by your wallet.

Two classes – those who own the means of production but do not produce, and those who produce but do not own.

Employment – employers employ workers as they need them, workers sell their labour-power

Markets (buying and selling) for most goods and services, including labour

Activities necessary to support the profit system, e.g. banking, insurance

Emphasis on competition

Socialism

A society without classes

Common ownership of the means of wealth production and distribution

Production to meet human need

Free access for all, each determining their own needs

No classes – all people stand equal relation to the means of wealth production

Necessary work – all those fit enough volunteer their services as preferred and needed

No buying, selling, or exchange - only giving and taking.

Work for necessary and useful production

Emphasis on democratic co-operation

Capitalism

Leaders and followers

Mostly hierarchical organizations giving and taking orders

Periodic elections to choose professional politicians

Government of Persons

Nation states, armed forces, wars

Education and health care for those who can pay

Crime (mostly property), a legal system to uphold private property rights

Environmental problems (pollution, global warming) caused by the manic drive for profit

Socialism

Participants meeting on an equal basis to make decisions

Mostly lateral organizations (co-operation between equals).

Elections as required to choose representatives or delegates.

Administration of Things.

No nation states, no armed forces, no wars.

Education and health care for all, as needed.

No property crime, any residual crime (against the person) dealt with humanely.

Cleanest technology for production for use, not profit.

Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of a society as a whole.

Declaration of Principles

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working-class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into an agent of emancipation and the overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
7. That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeing working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Canada, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



THOUGHT ABOUT JOINING THE SOCIALIST PARTY?

For further information about membership to The Socialist Party, return this form to: The Socialist Party, Box 4280, Victoria, BC, Canada V8X 3X8.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

Publications Order Form

Pamphlets and Books

Price & Qty

The Russian Revolution – Its Origin and Outcome.....	\$1.00 X _____
Pour Le Socialisme Mondial.....	\$1.50 X _____
Socialism As A Practical Alternative.....	\$1.50 X _____
Housing And The Insane Priority of Building Profits.....	\$1.50 X _____
How The Gods Were Made by J.Keracher.....	\$1.50 X _____
Some Aspects of Marxian Economics.....	\$1.50 X _____
The Right to be Lazy by P.Lafargue.....	\$1.50 X _____
The Market System Must Go! Why Reformism Doesn't Work...	\$1.50 X _____
Marxism Revisited.....	\$1.50 X _____
Socialist Principles Explained.....	\$1.50 X _____
How We Live and How We Might Live – William Morris.....	\$1.50 X _____
Marxism and Darwinism – Anton Pannekoek.....	\$1.50 X _____
From Capitalism to Socialism.....	\$1.50 X _____
What's Wrong with Using Parliament?.....	\$1.50 X _____
An Inconvenient Question – Socialism and The Environment....	\$1.50 X _____
World Socialist Review (WSPUS).....	\$5.00 X _____
The Impossibilists – A Brief Profile of the Socialist Party Of Canada by Peter E. Newell.....	\$15.00 X _____
A Study Guide to Marxism.....	\$1.00 X _____
Socialism Or Your Money Back – Articles from the Socialist Standard 1904-2004 (300 pages).....	\$3.00 X _____

TOTAL..... _____

Postage extra – send postal code for an estimate of the cost. Return this form along with cash, cheque or money order to:-

The Socialist Party of Canada, PO Box 4280, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ POSTAL CODE _____

CONTACT THE SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party of Canada
Box 4280, Victoria, BC
Canada V8X 3X8

Vancouver

John Ames

johnrmames@yahoo.com

Manitoba

Jaime Chinchilla Solano

jaimech@gmail.com

Ontario

John Ayers

jpayers@sympatico.ca

Visit us on the web at
worldsocialism.org/canada

And
[worldsocialistforum.com/
forum/index.php?](http://worldsocialistforum.com/forum/index.php?)

Email us at
spc@iname.com

